

*[“Strategy: Innovative Focusing of Resources” begins below]*

**Strategy: Innovative Focusing of Resources**

*Shrinking budgets and increased demands frame our future challenge. The Parks and Recreation Division can begin to address this challenge by setting clear priorities--but it must also maintain flexibility to respond to unforeseen opportunities and needs. It is essential to work "smarter"--to gain a better understanding of who we serve and what their needs and desires are. The Division must tap the potential of its existing resources and be willing to explore new and alternative ways of doing things. The ability to continue to deliver high quality park and recreation services depends on the ability to use City resources in a an efficient, effective, and innovative manner.*

**Findings:**

1. The Division's level of responsibility has increased over the past few decades due to a more diverse service population, a 24 percent increase in total parkland, and demand for new, larger, and more sophisticated recreation centers. However, the budget (including staff levels) has remained relatively flat. As a result, the Division's actual "buying power" has decreased.
2. Over the past decade there has been an increase in the number of federal, state, and local government regulations to ensure that facilities and equipment are structurally sound, accessible, and environmentally safe. Compliance with these requirements has contributed to significantly increased maintenance costs.
3. It is not possible to meet all recreational demands within the existing budget. Existing budget trends maintain the status quo dollar level but do not provide for expansion or creation of additional programs. It will be necessary to say "no" to some requests for additional services or to eliminate some existing services to accommodate new demands.

4. Over the past decade the amount of general revenue funds available for parks and recreation has varied significantly, with funds generally declining since the mid-1980s. To counteract this downturn, the Division has attempted to increase the amount of the overall budget covered by special funds derived from fees, leases, and rentals. Other supplemental revenue sources currently used include: grants, donations, and cost sharing through partnerships.
5. The largest portion of the Division's general fund budget (36 percent) supports programming and maintenance at recreation centers. This is followed by 25 percent for general park, vehicle, and building maintenance; 12 percent for forestry; 12 percent for Como Zoo and Conservatory; 8 percent for specialized programs and facilities; 5 percent for administration/support; 1 percent for park security/rangers; and 1 percent for environment and natural resources. This distribution of general funds has remained relatively constant over the past several years.
6. The Division is currently involved in partnerships with over 200 organizations representing private, public, and non-profit sectors as well as most public and private schools and colleges. Partnerships serve a variety of functions: preventing duplication, sharing facilities, providing services the City cannot, and offering specialized expertise.
7. There is an increasing number of organizations offering recreational services. While public agencies have traditionally provided the bulk of general recreation services, the private sector is playing a larger role in responding to increased demand for recreation. Private, non-profit organizations provide services similar to those provided by the public sector, which may lead to the impression that services are being duplicated. However, while there may be some competition for resources, there is rarely competition for participants. In addition, the popularity of private, for-pay recreational services (e.g. health clubs) has contributed to increased demand on the public sector to provide similar services at a lower cost.
8. The Division utilizes the help of numerous volunteers each year, including over 8000 in 1994. Volunteers are used in a variety of capacities from coaches and maintenance help to advisory roles. In addition to adult volunteers, the City's pool of volunteers also includes youth and student interns. 9. Information on recreation participation and demand is not currently compiled or analyzed in a coordinated and systematic manner which makes it difficult to identify or justify priorities.

***Objective 12: Establish priorities for use and distribution of city resources.***

General fund dollars allocated to parks and recreation cover basic services and basic facility maintenance. To accommodate additional services, funding is often drawn away from basic services and maintenance. Consequently, the level of basic services and maintenance declines. Given limited resources and an expanding range of needs and demands, clear priorities must be established to ensure an adequate level of maintenance and service is sustained and resources are utilized to the fullest extent possible.

**Policies:**

47. Develop a process to periodically evaluate and review existing facilities and services to determine their efficiency and effectiveness and measure use and demand.
48. New acquisitions, facilities, or services should only be made after thorough review to determine need and identification of resources to provide continual operation and maintenance (see Objective 4, policy 16).
49. Encourage mutually beneficial joint use arrangements and other alternative means of delivering recreation services, both formal and informal, *before* provision of new facilities or programs.
50. Give priority to recreation centers located in *Neighborhoods in Transition* areas when distributing resources for programs, services, and facilities.
51. Develop a policy to determine the use of enterprise and revenue funds.



***Objective 13: Increase utilization of supplemental resources.***

The availability of city resources to operate and maintain the park and recreation system is subject to economic fluctuations. Therefore, identifying a truly stable revenue source may not be feasible. Supplemental resources such as fees, grants, and partnerships, allow the Division to provide services people want which appropriated funds alone cannot support. In some cases, supplemental resources are necessary to ensure access to services for all members of our community. With restricted City resources, supplemental resources and non-traditional approaches will become increasingly important, particularly in providing neighborhood open space and recreation facilities.

***North Dale Recreation Center Fitness Room***

**Policies:**

52. Pursue opportunities to secure federal, state, and private resources (e.g. grants, partnerships) when and where possible to:
  - a. Ensure free access to programs or facilities;
  - b. Provide the organizational capacity to change service delivery, including the provision of new services;
  - c. Build, operate and maintain facilities;
  - d. Expand services beyond the general fund budget (e.g. specialist contracts, community education), provided that the intent of the Parks Division is to expand access or opportunities for citizens and not develop programs or expand services only to solely generate revenues or establish a special revenue fund.
53. Pursue mutually beneficial opportunities to involve the corporate/business community and neighborhood organizations in partnerships providing supplemental resources (e.g. leases, sponsorships, maintenance agreements).

***Objective 14: Improve utilization of human resources.***

Recruiting and maintaining a highly skilled and competent work force is essential to the operations of the Division. Likewise, volunteers provide vital support to staff operations and allow the City to engage in activities it might not do otherwise. Effective utilization of staff and volunteers requires continual reinvestment and commitment to recruitment, training, coordination, and recognition.

**Policies:**

54. Provide on-going skills training and development programs to improve and expand staff skills and capabilities.
55. Establish models to build staff capacity to work independently, as teams, or in partnerships to deliver services.

56. Improve the use and effectiveness of volunteers in the park system by maintaining:
  - a. A diverse pool of skilled volunteers;
  - b. An effective system for matching volunteers with specific tasks based on skills required, time commitment and other factors;
  - c. Adequate training and supervision.
57. Consistently reward and recognize staff and volunteers for their contributions to the park and recreation system.

***Objective 15: Improve management of resources.***

Changes in our service population, changing lifestyles, and rapidly changing recreation trends all contribute to the increased and growing diversity of demands, and competition for use of park resources. Providing more services and facilities has been the usual response. However, there is a limit to how much we can add to the system to accommodate new and changing needs. Rather, we need to effectively manage our resources to ensure that we provide a balance of high quality recreation opportunities. This requires a thorough understanding of needs and flexibility to respond to change. It also means improving the efficiency and effectiveness of facilities, operations, and maintenance.

**Policies:**

58. Improve data collection, coordination and analysis capabilities to strengthen capacity to provide adequate information for planning, evaluation and management.
59. Encourage flexibility in facility use, programming, and staffing (including volunteers).
60. Ensure facilities accommodate a balance of uses which reflect the diversity of community needs and demands.
61. Review, and revise if necessary, plan objectives and policies on a biannual basis, when a new two year action plan is developed.



***Oxford Aquatic Center***